

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows. This listing of claims replaces all prior versions.

1. (Withdrawn) A process of preparing an elastic thermally bonded nonwoven web, comprising:
 - (a) providing a thermally bonded nonwoven precursor web containing thermoplastic fibers; and
 - (b) subjecting the precursor web of step (a) to a drawing treatment in a machine direction at a drawing rate of from 45 to 70 %, and
a strain rate within a range of from 1000 to 2400 %/min
at a temperature between the softening point and the melting point of the fibers for preparing the elastic thermally bonded nonwoven web.
2. (Withdrawn) The process according to claim 1, comprising a processing speed in a range of from 200 to 400 m/min.
3. (Withdrawn) The process according to claim 1, wherein the drawing treatment in step (a) comprises introducing the thermally bonded nonwoven precursor web into a heating means for heating the web to a temperature between the softening point and the melting point of the fibers.
4. (Withdrawn) The process according to claim 1, which further comprises the step of cooling the web after the drawing treatment.
5. (Withdrawn) The process according to claim 1, wherein the precursor web contains polypropylene fibers.

6. (Withdrawn) The process according to claim 5, wherein the polypropylene fibers are contained in an amount of at least 30% by weight.

7. (Withdrawn) The process according to claim 1, wherein the precursor web contains cellulosic fibers.

8. (Withdrawn) The process according to claim 1, wherein the precursor web consists of polypropylene fibers.

9. (Withdrawn) The process according to claim 1, wherein the elastic nonwoven web has anisotropic elasticity properties.

10. (Withdrawn) The process of claim 9, wherein the ratio of elongation at break in machine cross direction to the elongation at break in machine direction is at least 800%.

11. (Withdrawn) The process according to claim 1, wherein said said nonwoven precursor web is a spunbonded web.

12. (Withdrawn) The process according to claim 1, wherein said nonwoven precursor web is a melt blown web.

13. (Withdrawn) The process according to claim 1, wherein said said nonwoven precursor web is a carded thermally bonded nonwoven web.

14. (Withdrawn) The process according to claim 1, wherein said nonwoven web is a laminate containing two or more nonwoven precursor webs selected from the group consisting of a spunbonded web, a melt blown web, and a carded thermally bonded nonwoven web.

15. (Withdrawn) The process according to claim 1, wherein said thermally bonded nonwoven web is a blend of thermoplastic fibers and cellulosic fibers wherein said web contains at least 30% thermoplastic fibers.

16. (Withdrawn) The process according to claim 1, wherein the the process is carried out continuously.

17. (Withdrawn) The continuous process according to claim 16, wherein the drawing treatment in step (a) comprises unwinding the thermally bonded nonwoven web into a first variable tension means which feeds said web into a web heating means for heating the web to a temperature between the softening point and the melting point of the fibers, followed by continuously stretching the heated web lengthwise in the machine direction, cooling the web and collecting the cooled web.

18. (Withdrawn) A thermo-mechanical method for treating a nonwoven web, comprising:

- a. providing a thermally bonded polypropylene nonwoven web of carded, spunbond, SMS and SMMS as precursor web;
- b. providing an unwinder roll and a winding roll in a distance of 6-10 meters;
- c. continuously feeding the precursor web from the unwinder roll to the winding roll at a speed in a range of from 150m/min to 400m/min;
- d. heating the precursor web at a temperature between the softening temperature and melting temperature of the thermoplastic polypropylene; and
- e. drawing the heated web by increasing the speed of the winding roll over the unwinder roll at least 45% and to 70%, to thereby reduce the width of the web by 50% to 65 % whereby the strain rates are within the range of 1000% to 2400% /min.

19. (Withdrawn) The process according to claim 18, wherein the unwinder roll is a pair of pin-rolls to make an S-wrap for creating the draw ratio and releasing the finished web to the winding roll.

20. (Withdrawn) The process according to claim 18, wherein the precursor web is a single layer or multiple layers construction that are thermally bonded or laminated.

21. (Canceled).

22. (Currently Amended) An elastic thermally bonded nonwoven web consisting essentially of non-elastomeric fibers, which has an elasticity in the cross direction of at least 70% recovery from a 100% elongation, and at least 60% recovery from a 150% elongation, ~~said wherein the web being is obtained or obtainable by a process comprising the following steps:~~

- (a) providing a thermally bonded nonwoven precursor web containing consisting essentially of non-elastomeric fibers; and
- (b) subjecting the precursor web of step (a) to a drawing treatment in a machine direction at a drawing rate of from 45 to 70 %, and a strain rate within a range of from 1000 to 2400 %/min at a temperature between the softening point and the melting point of the fibers for preparing the elastic thermally bonded nonwoven web.

23. (Previously Presented) The elastic nonwoven web according to claim 22, made from a nonwoven precursor selected from the group consisting of carded, spunbond, SMS, and SMMS, wherein the nonwoven precursor comprises polypropylene thermoplastic fibers, and wherein the elastic nonwoven web is heated and drawn in the longitudinal direction over a 6-10 meter distance at a speed range of 150m/min to 400m/min to reduce 50% to 65% the width of its precursor, wherein the drawing is made by feeding the web through a heating device installed between the unwinder roll and the winding roll to heat up the web in the temperature between the

softening temperature and melting temperature of the thermoplastic fibers and by spontaneously increasing the speed of the winding roll over the unwinder roll at least 45% to maintain the strain rate in the range of 1000% to 2400% per minute, whereby the elastic nonwoven web is characterized by the elasticity of at least 70% recovery from a 100% elongation, or 60% recovery from a 150% elongation, in the cross direction.

24. (Previously Presented) The elastic nonwoven web of claim 23, wherein the precursor web is composed of co-filament fibers, or a mix of mono and co-filaments.

25. (Currently Amended) The elastic nonwoven web of claim ~~2423~~, wherein the core of the co-filaments is composed of different thermoplastics of sheath.

26. (Previously Presented) An elastic laminate comprising:

- (a) the elastic nonwoven web of claim 22; and
- (b) a stretchable substrate bonded to the elastic nonwoven web.

27. (Previously Presented) The elastic laminate of claim 26 wherein the substrate is an elastomeric layer.

28. (Previously Presented) The elastic laminate of claim 26 wherein the substrate is a film.

29-33. (Canceled).

34. (Previously Presented) An article containing an elastic nonwoven web according to claim 22.

35. (Previously Presented) The article according to claim 34, which is a disposable product selected from the group consisting of a sanitary protection product, a medical product, a protective work-wear or and a personal use item.

36. (Previously Presented) The article according claim 35, wherein the disposable product is an adult or infant diaper, or a sanitary napkin.

37. (Previously Presented) The article according claim 35, wherein the medical product is a mask, an operating gown, a head cover, or an operating drape.

38. (Previously Presented) The article according claim 35, wherein the protective work-wear is a coverall, a head cover or mask.

39. (Previously Presented) The article according claim 35, wherein the personal use item is underwear.

40. (Withdrawn) The process according to claim 14, wherein the nonwoven web is a laminate and a thermoplastic film.

41. (New) An elastic thermally bonded nonwoven web consisting essentially of monofilament non-elastomeric fibers, which has an elasticity in the cross direction of at least 70% recovery from a 100% elongation, and at least 60% recovery from a 150% elongation.